

2.3 SITE CONTEXT

A brief summary of the local context, with a particular regard to the differing organisation, scale, form, function, and character of the principal sites surrounding the College.

2.3.1 OVERVIEW OF SURROUNDING AREA

The residential neighbourhood to the east of the site is known as the Heatham Estate. The majority of this area was developed during the 1930s, though part of it dates from the 19th Century, and parts were developed more recently. Though predominantly east of Egerton Road, a small portion of this estate is on the western side along with the College.

The northern boundary of the Main Site is the A316, also known as the Chertsey Road, which is a major dual carriage-way into London from the south-west. The College is west of the Whitton Road Roundabout, and only has access from the westbound side of the A316. Along the A316 and across the Duke of Northumberland's River is an area of open land known as the Rosebine Car park, which is predominantly used on match/event days only.

The residential area across the A316 is similar to the Heatham Estate, though somewhat less coherent in age, character and organisation. To the north of this residential area is Rugby Football Union's Twickenham Stadium.

Immediately west of the College is a public right of way known as Marsh Farm Lane. Marsh Farm Lane runs from the A316 past the College's Main Site, through the

open spaces on Craneford Way, across the River Crane, and over the Rail line.

Twickenham Stoop, also referred to as the Harlequins Site, lies just beyond Marsh Farm Lane. Nuffield Health occupies an area of the Harlequins Site.

To the south-west of the Main Site, part of the Harlequins Site is an area of open land, covered by Public Open Space and Other Open Land of Townscape Importance (OOLTI) designations, beyond which lies an apartment building.

Further to the south-west of the Main site is the Council Depot.

The western edge of both the Council Depot and Twickenham Stoop is the Duke of Northumberland's River. Across the river lies the Dene Estate which is a conservation area characterised by low-scale semi-detached bungalows.

The eastern edge of the Council Depot borders an area of Public Open Space in Borough ownership known as Craneford Way open space. This land is Metropolitan Open Land.

The open space to the east of Marsh Farm Lane, called the College Playing Field Site, is in the College's ownership save for a small strip abutting the River Crane which is in the Environment Agency's ownership.

This area is likewise Metropolitan Open Land.

To the south of the Craneford Way sites the River Crane runs in a man-made canal, dating from the 1950s. The river forms part of London's Blue Ribbon network which is protected under the London Plan.

The River Crane connects a series of open spaces to the west and east of the College area. These include Hounslow Heath to the west, Kneller Gardens and the Crane Park immediately the west of the Duke of Northumberland's River, the Mereway Nature Park south of the Council Depot, the Craneford Way open spaces, Twickenham Rough and the Moorhead Recreation Ground further east.

The National Rail Waterloo-Reading Mainline towards Staines runs south of the River Crane, crossing over it immediately south of the pedestrian path on this side of the Council Depot.

To the south-west of the site lies Twickenham Rail Station and Brewery Wharf (the former Post Office sorting office site), which is being redeveloped predominantly for housing. As part of this redevelopment, a new pathway near the River Crane and passing along Twickenham Rough has been enabled as part of related planning approvals.

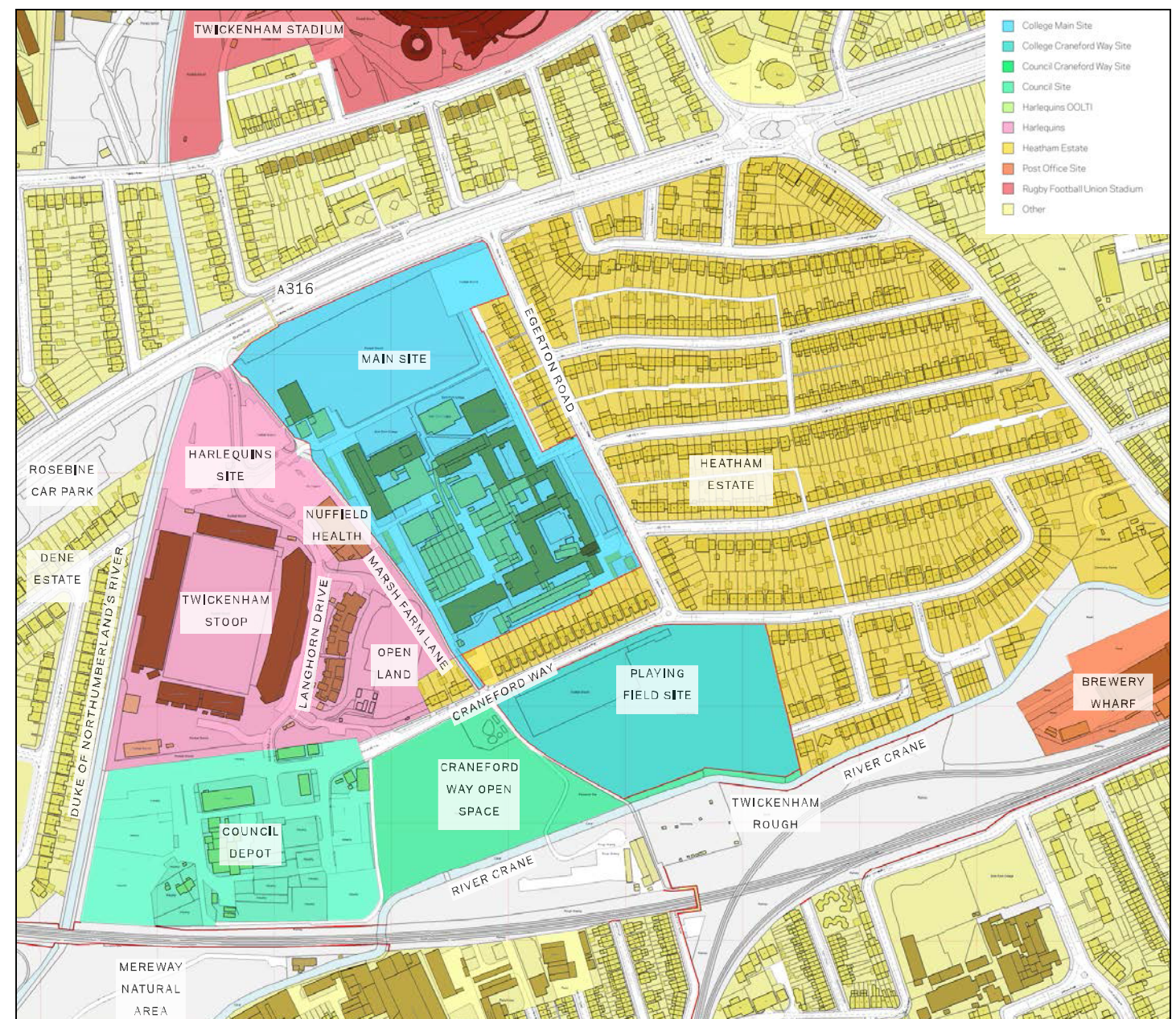


DIAGRAM 2.3.1 PRINCIPAL SITES SURROUNDING THE COLLEGE

2.3.2 URBAN GRAIN

The Heatham Estate, is of a regular and consistent scale, linearly organised along a number of parallel east-west streets leading from the town centre & rail station.

The north of the Main Site is defined by a row of large, protected Horse Chestnut trees adjoining the A316. The urban grain across the A316 is similar to that east of the site, though somewhat less coherent in character and organisation. The views to the north are dominated by Twickenham Stadium.

The grain to the west of the Main Site is of a sharply different character to that east of the site - consisting of a few large buildings with little coherence in their physical relationships, activities, timing of use, and type and number of users. In addition to the rugby stadium, the Harlequins Site hosts a sports centre, a large parking area, a 4-storey apartment building, and an area of protected open land.

South of the Harlequins Site is the Council Depot which is predominantly open air storage and parking. This in turn is bounded by the rail line, a natural area and the River Crane.

The western edge of both the Council Depot and Twickenham Stoop is the Duke of Northumberland's river.

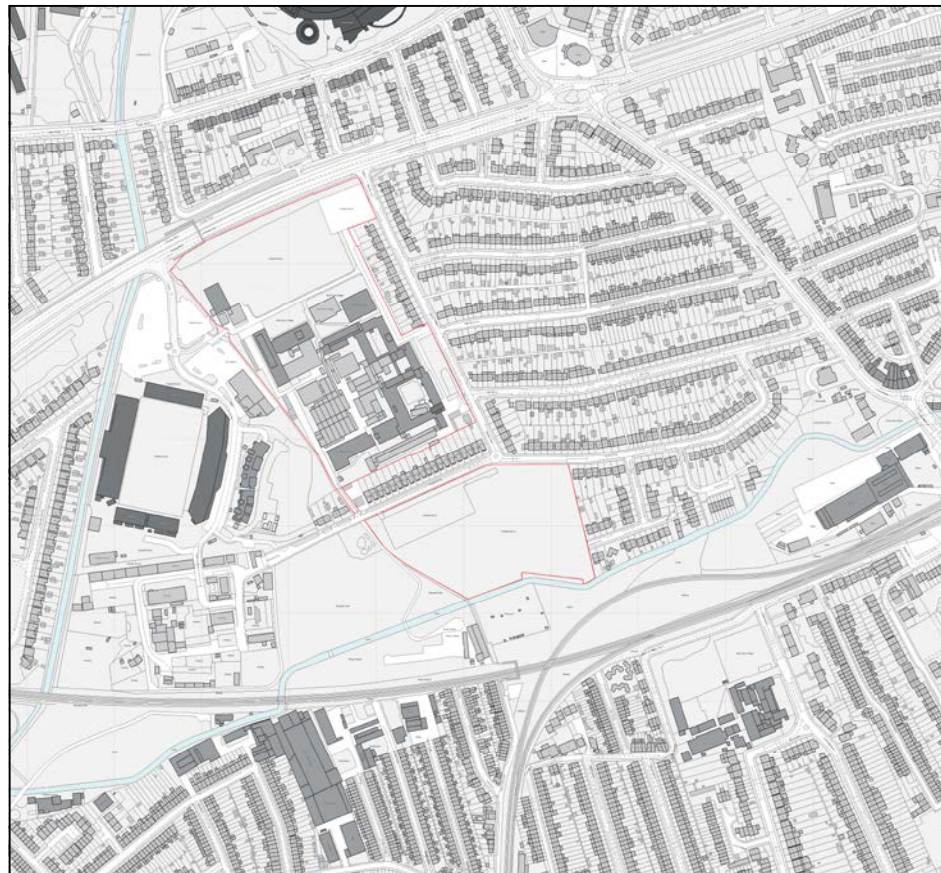


DIAGRAM 2.3.2 BUILDING FABRIC SURROUNDING THE COLLEGE SITE (DARKER BUILDINGS ARE TALLER)

The south of the area is defined by the openness of the River Crane area and railway route, beyond which is dense terrace housing and light industrial buildings. The Craneford Way fields are separated from the Main Site by a row of semi-detached houses, and is similarly overlooked to the east by private housing.

The existing urban grain of the College Site itself is much more complex and dense than its surroundings. In terms of building size it is more similar to the larger building footprints to the west, though with much greater site coverage and far less space between buildings.

2.3.3 BUILDING HEIGHTS

The existing buildings on the Main Site range in size and scale. The tallest points are around 5 storeys in height, but the majority are 2 to 3 storeys in height. The existing College buildings are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.

As described in the RuTC Planning Brief, the buildings to the east and north of the College are largely 2-storey with pitched roofs. West of the site lie a 4-storey apartment block and Twickenham Stoop (5-6 storeys in height). The planning guidance for the site indicates that - except for landmark features - any new buildings on the site would be expected to fit into the slope defined by these buildings.

Significantly taller buildings can be found in Twickenham Town Centre to the south and south-west, and to the north of the College where Twickenham Stadium is particularly out of scale with its context.

Subsequent conversations with the LPA have suggested that the intention of this guidance is for the boundaries of the site to be sympathetic in scale to the adjoining properties, but that a linear slope across the site would not be expected.



DIAGRAM 2.3.3 EXISTING BUILDING HEIGHTS SURROUNDING THE COLLEGE SITE

BUILDING HEIGHTS AND MASSING INCREASE FROM EAST TO WEST. THE DESIGN OF THE REDEVELOPED COLLEGE WOULD SEEK TO REFLECT THIS PATTERN, INCREASING IN HEIGHT FROM THE RESIDENTIAL SCALE OF EGERTON ROAD TOWARDS THE A316 AND THE HARLEQUINS SITE. THE EXCEPTION TO THIS GENERAL RULE MAY BE TWO MARKER BUILDINGS [AT THE NORTH-WEST CORNER AND AT THE END OF COURT WAY]. ANY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD ALSO REFLECT THIS PATTERN DEPENDING ON ITS LOCATION ON THE SITE, PARTICULARLY THE SCALE OF PROPERTIES ON CRANEFORD WAY.

Source: RuTC Planning Brief, section 6.11

2.4 HISTORY OF SITE DEVELOPMENT

The College has developed alongside its surroundings from the 1930s onwards.

2.4.1 HISTORICAL MAPS OF THE COLLEGE SITE



DIAGRAM 2.4.1
1871 MAP
Prior to the 20th Century, the College sites (red), Craneford Way open space (green), the Council Depot (orange), the Harlequins site (pink), and their surroundings were part of the Marsh Farm and other farming properties.

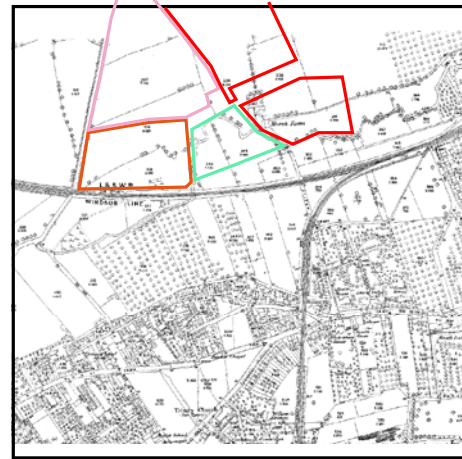


DIAGRAM 2.4.2
1896 MAP
By the turn of the century, there is further evidence of development in Twickenham, but the study sites remain essentially unchanged. By this point the crossing under the Railroad to the Council Depot from the south has been clearly established.

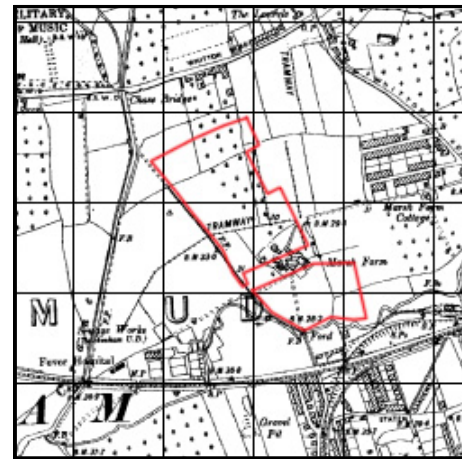


DIAGRAM 2.4.3
1898 MAP
By 1898 we can see the earliest residential development in the Heatham Estate area - here labelled Marsh Farm Cottages.

At this point the first sewage works and a fever hospital has been built on the Council Depot.

Marsh Farm Lane has been established as a footpath with a ford across the River Crane. The first part of the Heatham Estate is appearing - here labelled Marsh Farm Cottage. This part of the heatham estate is of a slightly different character than the newer parts.

The 1898 Map suggests that tramways have been established, including one crossing the College site providing access to the sewage works, though these do not appear in future maps.

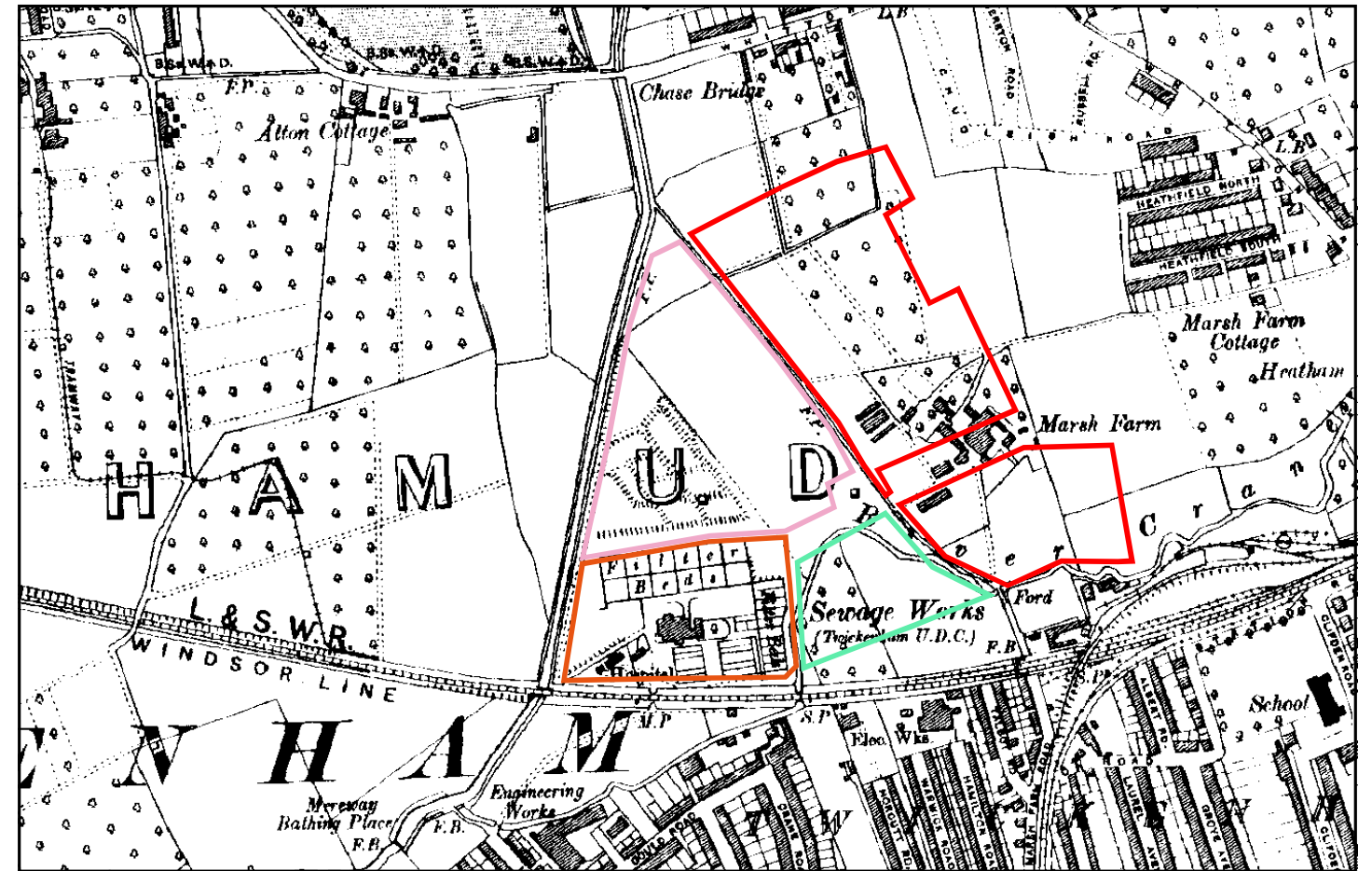


DIAGRAM 2.4.4
1915 MAP
By 1915 we can see the sewage works on the Council Depot have expanded through the creation of additional filter beds. The plans suggest that the excavated spoil may have been placed in mounds on what is now the Harlequins site.

Marsh Farm Lane has been extended as a footpath to connect with the area around where Twickenham Stadium now lies, where additional development appears to be planned/occurring.

From these plans we can see that some of the buildings associated with Marsh Farm have been built on both of the College's sites.

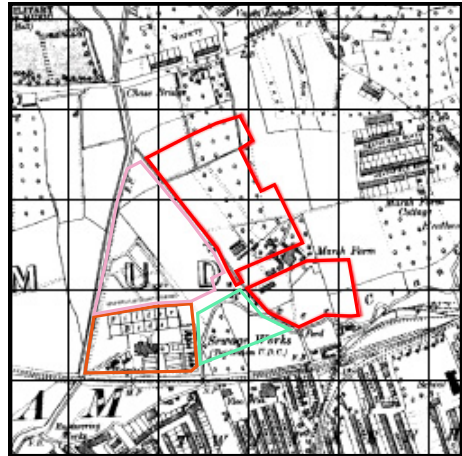


DIAGRAM 2.4.5
1920 MAP

Prior to the 1920s we can see that there remains little development in the area of Twickenham north of the railway tracks. However, the area of Twickenham south of the railway is largely complete.



DIAGRAM 2.4.6
1934 MAP

The early 1930s see the development of the Great Chertsey Road, though by this point it has not reached the College site or Duke of Northumberland's river.

The eastern half of the Heatham Estate has been substantially developed at this point in time.

The 1934 map suggests that some form of development is planned or has occurred on the Harlequins site, which appears to be further filtration beds for the sewage works, though this is unclear. There is conflicting evidence of this development in future maps. An area of the Harlequins site is set aside as allotment gardens.



DIAGRAM 2.4.7
1938 MAP

By 1938 the College has taken form, though it does not appear to have developed the Craneford Way Site by this time.

The western half of the Craneford site appears to be slated for redevelopment at this point in time. The area of cottages to the west of the Harlequins site is indicated as being planned for development.

Marsh Farm no longer appears on the map, though the historic path to the house from the ford over the River Crane is still present.

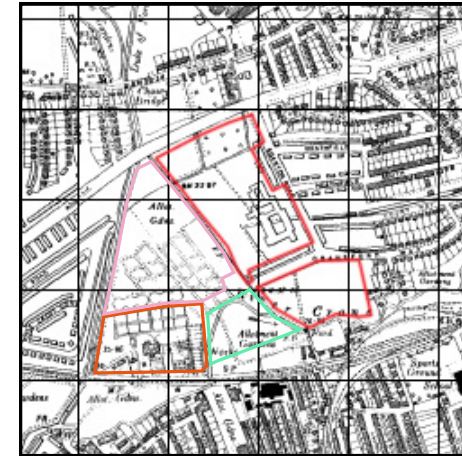


DIAGRAM 2.4.8
1949 MAP

In 1949 we can see that the College remains in its original condition, and that little additional development of the area has taken place. The Heatham Estate does not appear fully developed, but the majority of the site context had been established.

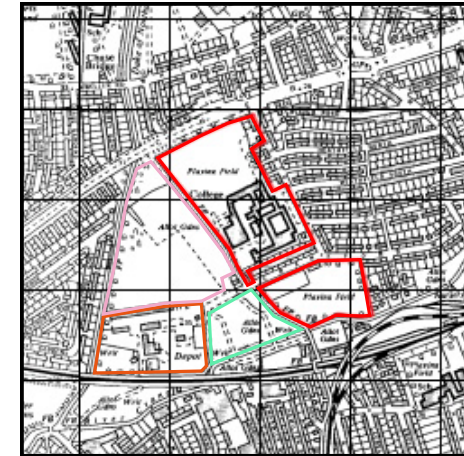


DIAGRAM 2.4.9
1966 MAP

By 1966 we can see the rerouting of the River Crane into its current channel, the establishment of the bridge crossing the River Crane at the location of the old ford, the closing of the sewage works, the establishment of the Council Depot, the establishment of playing fields along Craneford Way, and the construction of the various buildings to the rear of the College site.

It appears that by this point in time the Playing Fields at the north of the Main Site and on Craneford Way have been incorporated into the College site.

It is understood that Twickenham Stoop was started in 1963, but it does not appear on this map.

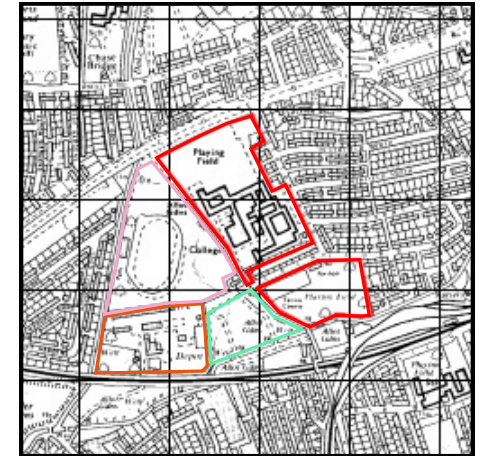


DIAGRAM 2.4.10
1975 MAP

Through 1975, the College continues to expand towards the rear of its site.

By this point we can see Twickenham Stoop has been constructed, completing all of the principal elements in the local context.

2.5 VISUAL CHARACTER

The area to the east of the College, known as the Heatham estate, is of regular and consistent scale, and primarily suburban in character.



2.5.1 VIEWS EAST OF THE COLLEGE SITE (HEATHAM ESTATE)



1. VIEW ALONG COURT WAY TOWARDS COLLEGE, HIGHLIGHTING THE COLLEGE TOWER'S ROLE AS A LOCAL LANDMARK.



2. TYPICAL 1930S PRIVATE HOUSING OF THE HEATHAM ESTATE TO EAST OF COLLEGE SITE.



3. PRIVATE HOUSING ALONG EGERTON ROAD, SHOWING PASSAGE TO CAR PARKING BEHIND HOUSING.



4. VIEW ALONG CRANEFORD WAY FROM COURT WAY.



5. VIEW SHOWING MID-BLOCK PATHS, SHOWING TYPICAL PRIVATE HOUSING.



6. POSTWAR HOUSING ALONG EGERTON ROAD.